

A City On A Hill



A Story of a Community, a Church, a People by Jewel R. Johnson.

INTRODUCTION

Compiling the data for this booklet has given me the pleasant experience of delving a little more deeply into the lives of the people I have come to love, a community that twice I have made my home, and a church I count it a privilege to serve. I am grateful to all the beautiful persons who have contributed in any way to this story. A few of their names appear in the text, but most of them do not.

I want to mention here some who in a direct way have made this booklet possible. St. Peters congregation patiently listened to most of the material in a series of six sermons. Anita Marosko translated German minutes and other documents. Jack Wiggins and Martha Poldrack produced some helpful sketches. Oleta Becker gave technical advice. Jack Sutton shared historical business data. Donna Gates gave of her time and energy to oversee the printing. Her vocational class at Elgin High School transformed my scribbling into readable printed pages. The Youth Fellowship put the booklet together. Thanks to them and all the others who helped.

Since I am pastor of St. Peters Church, part of this story is autobiographical and perhaps more biased than other parts.

The material is not copyrighted and may be quoted freely. I would appreciate it, however, if proper reference is given.

The first printing of this booklet was done in summer of 1974 to celebrate the 80th Anniversary of St. Peters Church. When the supply was depleted a number of people urged me to provide another edition. I made no changes except to correct typographical errors, and this second printing was done in January 1979. Thanks to the Merchants Press of Taylor for this second printing.

Jewel R. Johnson

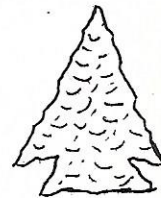
THE INDIAN FORERUNNERS

This story about St. Peters Church and the Coupland Community, to be balanced, must begin at the very beginning. In this case the beginning has to do with the original human inhabitants of this land. The gently rolling hills and valleys that surround Coupland provided a beautiful wilderness home for the American Indians for many centuries before the white people ever dreamed of crossing the sea to the "new world".

But, unlike the later German and Swiss settlers to the region, our Indian predecessors did not leave us copies of the minutes of their powwows, or any other written documents for that matter. It is really unfortunate that such records are not available because without them we can never adequately reconstruct the whole story of this land and all of its people.

What we do have, nevertheless, is a remarkable number of "things" that the Indians left behind--arrow points, pottery, tools and other artifacts of their culture. These stone and clay treasures are still being unearthed even today by the plough shares of the farmers and by arrowhead collectors who comb the valleys after a heavy rain, picking up and adding to their collections precious little chunks of ancient history. Dr. McWhorter, Philip Johnson, Otis Hardi and many other local people have amassed hundreds of these artifacts in their private collections.

By carefully studying such materials, historians have been able to piece together educated guesses concerning the way our Indian fore-runners lived and the kind of people they were. One such historian is W. W. Newcomb, curator of the Memorial Museum at the University of Texas and author of the book, **THE INDIANS OF TEXAS**. In his analysis of arrow points from the Coupland region, he has concluded that Indians occupied this area from about 6,000 years before Christ.



A second source of information about Indian life in these parts is provided by a number of written eye-witness accounts of white settlers and explorers of the nineteenth century. When a certain measure of bias is taken into account, this information also helps us to develop our understanding of the past. For instance, in 1828 a Mexican citizen by the name of Jose Maria Sanchez visited central Texas. In a letter

that he wrote to his folks back home, he described the natives of this area in the following way:

"Their Huts were small and barely numbered thirty, all conical in shape, made of an occasional buffalo skin. In the center of each is located the fireplace around which lie the male Indians in complete inaction, while the women are in constant motion either curing the meat of the game, or tanning the skins, or preparing food, which consists chiefly of roast meat; or perhaps making arms for their indolent husbands. " *

The Indians who inhabited the Coupland area were more or less independent tribes, and they called themselves TICKANWATIC, a name which meant "the most human people". Perhaps that Indian word is a clue as to how they liked to picture themselves. The Indian neighbors to the north called them TONKAWAYA which has a similar sound but a different meaning — a clue, perhaps, to the way they were viewed by their closest neighbors. The word means "they all stay together". From these two Indian words TONKAWA is derived, the label most commonly given to these people by historians and others who study their culture and write about them today.

The Tonkawa Indians were not adept at agriculture though they tried it for a brief period in their history. Rather they lived a style of life that harmonized quite well with their environment. They were not affluent by our standards or even by Indian standards, but they supported themselves to their own satisfaction by hunting and trapping animals such as rabbit, skunk, rattle snake, deer, and some buffalo. Berries, nuts, cactus, mesquite beans and other types of wild vegetables and herbs rounded out their simple diet.

Their clothing was made from the skins of animals; however, they wore only what was required by weather conditions, preferring rather to wear little or nothing at all. The crude shelters they lived in were also constructed of the skins of animals.

The beautiful stream that meanders its way around the north side of Coupland was christened by the Spanish "The Creek of the Blessed Souls." It is now known as Brushy Creek. Through the years it provided the Indians with an abundance of fish as well as a more or less constant supply of fresh water. With its thickly wooded banks, Brushy Creek was probably the main attraction that brought a group of Indians to this particular area and kept them here through the years.

(* A Trip to Texas, Southwestern Historical Quarterly. Vol 29:249-288)

In recent years when the city of Austin was considering the name of its Town Lake, a suggestion was made that it be called Tonkawa after these central Texas Indian tribes. The idea was dropped, however, when some people complained that these Tonkawa Indians were treacherous cannibals. It was not an altogether fair indictment of these people though it was based on a certain thread of truth. Evidently, on rare occasions, the Tonkawas carried out rites in which they ate the flesh of their human enemies who had been killed in battle. It was a primitive superstition or religious rite through which they thought they could acquire some of the spiritual powers of their foes. An additional idea was that by a frenzied ceremony the whole community could join in celebrating the victory and in continuing to punish or destroy their enemy even after death.



The Tonkawa Indians of this area were weak and poor compared to the Comanches and Apaches who controlled the buffalo country to the north. They also became somewhat subservient to the whites and joined them in fighting other Indian groups. As the years went by their life and their culture were gradually squeezed out as between the two jaws of a vice--the raiding parties of their more war-like Indian brothers on the one side, and the advance of white man's civilizations, his diseases and his bullets on the other. By 1840 all the Tonkawa Indians had been destroyed or pushed out of the area. By 1948 only about 50 Tonkawas were left in existence, and they had long since been moved to a reservation in a northern State.

THE BATTLE OF BRUSHY

In contrast to the resident docile Tonkawas the itinerant Comanches were aggressive and hostile toward the white settlers. One story passed down through the generations is about a battle that took place a few miles north of Coupland. On January 25, 1839, word was passed around the white communities that a band of Comanches were encamped on the San Gabriel river. Captain John D. Moore organized three companies of volunteers from Colorado River settlements to conduct a search and destroy mission against them. The noted Indian fighter and folk historian, Noah

Smithwick, took charge of a company from Bastrop. An allied Lipan Indian group led by Chief Castro also joined the whites in the operation. This little rag-tag army finally located the Comanches on the San Gabriel River on February 14, 1839. They inflicted some damage on the Indians, scattering the survivors.

A few days later a large number of the surviving Comanches retaliated by raiding a number of white settlements near Hills Prairie and Webbers Prairie. The settlement of Hogeeye (now Elgin) was also hit by the raiding party. One white woman was killed, one of her sons was killed, and another of her sons was taken captive by the Indians.

This attack so enraged the citizens of these settlements that they quickly organized a small army of about 80 men and boys and set out in hot pursuit of the Comanches. They chased the Indians through the area that is now Coupland and caught up with them near what is now Brown's gin and Battle Ground Creek. There followed a confusing and bloody confrontation known in history as the Battle of Brushy. When the tumult was over a large number of both Indians and whites had been killed. In recent years Taylor school students have erected a brown marble monument to mark the spot where the battle occurred. (To see it you must turn west on a dirt lane just south of Brown's gin). That battle was the last violent confrontation between the whites and the Indians in this region, though traveling Comanches on horseback were sighted as late as 1864.

Even though no Indians remain in the area, they left their mark upon this land--the artifacts they left behind and the trees they bent to point to the direction of their camps. They also left their mark upon our culture. One of the reasons the white settlers were able to survive as well as they did in this rugged land was their ability to adopt many of the ways of the Indians. It would be unwise to idolize the Indians; but perhaps we still have some lessons to learn from them, especially in the field of ecology, the reverent care of the earth and the responsible use of its resources.

COLONISTS

The first white settlers to the Coupland area were homesteaders from the southeast United States. They took up residence on land they got from colonist Stephen F. Austin. The Spanish government had granted Austin a huge area of central Texas land and royal permission to settle families in Texas to create a buffer zone between the Spanish settlements and the Indians. These colonists were given a square league (4,428 acres) of land per family at a price of $12\frac{1}{2}\text{¢}$ per acre, an attractive deal compared to the public lands in the United States selling for one to two dollars per acre. During just a few years of this rapid march of history, the settlers

became citizens first of Spain, then of independent Mexico, then of independent Texas and finally back again as they had started as citizens of the United States.

From the time of the original Austin Grant, the land in the area was repeatedly subdivided and changed ownership frequently through the years. Jesse Barker settled on land just north of Brushy that he thought was his Austin grant. But, about 20 years later some surveyors came through the country and informed him that he had got his creeks mixed up and had actually settled on someone else's grant. By that time he had already established his roots here so he arranged to buy the land from its legal owner, and he and his offspring have remained in the area ever since. After the war for Independence some of the land was given by the Republic of Texas to soldiers as war bounty. Most of these soldiers in turn sold the land to speculators like Morgan C. Hamilton, who bought the land in the Coupland area. We will tell more about both Hamilton and Coupland later.

CATTLE EMPIRES AND CONFLICTS

The main source of livelihood in this area during the period 1831-1835 was livestock. The Spanish had introduced the Longhorn cow into the country during their rule. Then after the Mexicans abandoned the land in 1842, these cows that were left behind in the wilderness multiplied phenomenally and spread over the countryside until they numbered in the millions. They became wild, dangerous and tough with horns that spread as much as eight feet from tip to tip.

These wild cows and also wild mustangs drifted at will over the great "sea of grass" as the rugged prairie was called. The laws of the Republic of Texas had made unbranded stock "public property" so they became the private property of any cattle hunter who caught them and put his brand on them. This "free for all" system raised about as many thorny questions as it settled. For example, who owns the unbranded calf of a branded cow or the unbranded colt of a branded mare?

Sticky problems like this, plus plain old human orneriness resulted in bitter and bloody cattle wars among the settlers. It led to the general policy adopted by many rancheros to settle their arguments, vent their anger, establish their property rights and sometimes just try to prove their manhood with their six shooters.



An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth became the only ethic that many of these frontiersmen knew or were willing to follow.

A case in point is related here because it involved German immigrants. Earnest Poldrack moved from Germany and settled on land east of Coupland near the Olives, a family noted for violence. The Olives were driving their cattle across the land of Poldrack and Peter Zieschang. In the fall of 1876 both land owners objected to Bob Olive because of the damage being done to their land. Bob Olive and Sam Carr responded by pistol whipping them and threatening to shoot them. In both instances, criminal charges were filed and the cases were placed on the docket in Georgetown along with about seven other charges against Olive, including the murder of Dock Kelly and the kidnapping of a man by the name of Ware. The Olive family had a lawyer who was able to delay action in these cases and they were released. In the meantime, Bob Olive skipped the country and moved to Nebraska. There he ran into the same kind of problems and he was killed by Luther Mitchel in a shootout on Mitchel's farm. His body was brought back by train and buried in the cemetery at Lawrence Chapel. Then 12 years later, on January 13, 1890, the leaden feet of justice finally got around to the cases against Olive. The states attorney in Georgetown moved that the grand jury dismiss all criminal actions against Bob Olive in each case "for the following reason: to wit that the defendant is dead." And for each case the court passed a resolution ordering that "the reason so stated is good and sufficient reason to authorize such dismissal".

In spite of all the violence that accompanied it, the cattle industry played an important role in the development of this area. Periodically thousands of head of wild cows were rounded up and driven to the northern states of Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska to market. From there, the eastern demand for beef was supplied by rail. This cattle trade became an important tie that began to bind the North and South back together again after the tragic division of the Civil War.

CIVIL WAR

The war between the states not only divided the north from the south but it also divided Texan from Texan. And the people of the Coupland area were as deeply and bitterly divided by the conflict as any other area in the state.

Williamson County had by this time become settled by a number of European immigrants who had come to this country to escape such repressive policies in their homelands; so they wanted no part of either institution, slavery or war. It is instructive to note that Williamson County was one of the very few counties in the state that responded to Sam Houston's urgent

appeal by voting against secession 480 to 349. The state as a whole, however, voted overwhelmingly for secession which paved the way for Texas' entrance into the war.

When the war finally came, many who believed in it, and some whose consciences were troubled by serious questions about it, went off together to fight as a matter of duty. Frederick Wade, a Sunday school teacher at Lawrence Chapel, became the convening officer to organize the troops from this area. They gathered at the traditional public picnic area, Post Oak Island, east of Coupland, to listen to eloquent speeches by sweaty orators exalting the Confederacy. With the sound of this patriotic appeal still ringing in their ears the men were led off to combat by Lieutenant Wade.

There were many young men in the area, though, who refused to go along with the war. Some of them went into exile in the backwoods of Texas or across the border into Mexico rather than to serve in a cause they thought was wrong. Still others escaped from the area and joined the Union forces to fight on the other side. On a number of occasions groups of men suspected of leaving the country for that purpose were caught and massacred.

One anti-Confederate resister who managed to successfully escape the country was Theodore Van Buren Coupland, for whom the village of Coupland is named. He was born in 1836 in Alabama. Moving to Texas a few years before the Civil War, he settled in Austin where he became deputy sheriff of Travis County. When the war came he and his uncle, A. J. (Jack) Hamilton, stole away to Mexico and then made their way by ship to New Orleans where they offered their services to the Union Army. Coupland was commissioned an officer, a major, to serve in the first Texas Cavalry of the Union Army.

When the war ended in 1865 Major Coupland was mustered out of the Union in San Antonio and returned to New Orleans, where he served in United States government appointments. He was collector of the port of New Orleans for a number of years and then became deputy clerk of the U.S. Court.

RECONSTRUCTION

Meanwhile, back in Texas, Coupland's uncle, A. J. (Jack) Hamilton, with whom he had served in the Union Army, was appointed provisional Governor of the State of Texas. President Andrew Johnson made the appointment hoping that Hamilton would be able to

bring Texas back peacefully into the Union and heal the wounds in Texas society inflicted by the war. To fulfill that purpose Governor Hamilton declared a general, complete, and unconditional amnesty for Confederates and all other Texans whose offenses against the United States were in any way connected with the war.

The President's and the Governor's generous spirit of reconciliation was not shared though by many others in positions of political power. They wanted to punish the South and all who had served the cause of the Confederacy. In fact the Governor's own brother, Morgan C. Hamilton, was a member of this radical faction of the Republican party made up of a host of new arrivals from the North--such as Freedman's Bureau officials, army officers and the like. Citizens of Texas gave the whole group the descriptive title, "Carpetbaggers". Their main impact on Texas was repression, dissension and suppression of human rights. While they were in power they passed bills establishing a gestapo-like state militia; they gave windfall grants of millions of acres of land to the railroads; and they extended their own terms of office.

Though he was a leading figure in this reconstruction party, Morgan C. Hamilton finally began to express opposition to these policies. He was appointed the first U. S. Senator from Texas after the Civil War and from that vantage point in Washington he began to attack the police state tendency of his cohorts back home. They reacted to his criticism by declaring his election to the Senate invalid on a fabricated technicality. The man they sent to Washington to take his place was neither a Texas citizen nor a legal resident of the state, so the Senate Judiciary Committee refused to seat him ruling that Hamilton was entitled to finish out his term.

The part that Senator Hamilton played in the Story of Coupland was that he owned the land on which the village of Coupland would eventually be built. In fact, he had accumulated large blocks of land all along Brushy Creek from Shiloh to Rices Crossing and far north on the prairie. He had purchased this particular parcel on which Coupland stands in 1858 and 1859 as part of the Joseph Jordon and Jacob Sappington surveys. It is identified in the court records as the south bank of Brushy Creek, and it was also known as Brushy Farm and Battleground Pasture.

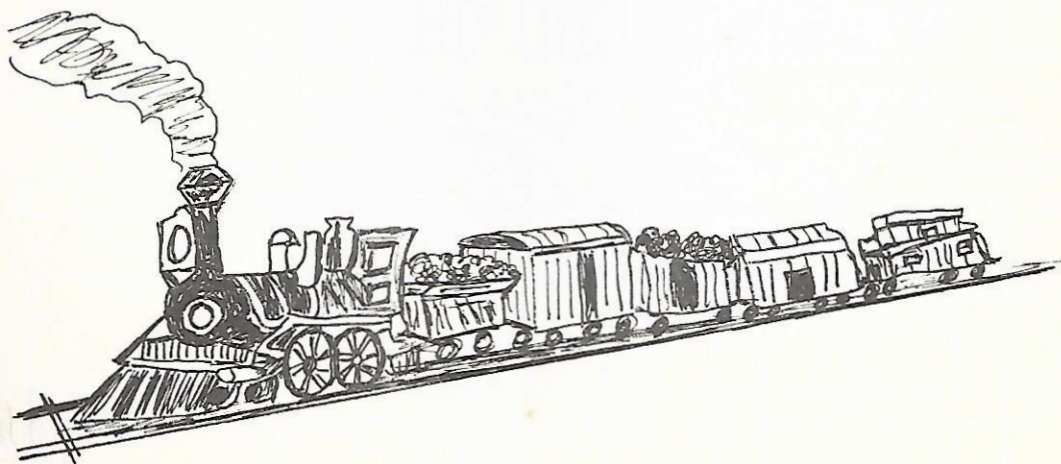
After serving his term in Congress, Senator Hamilton moved from Texas to New York where in 1883 he died. He left his estate, including this land, to the five children of his deceased sister, Karen Hamilton Coupland. One of her sons was Theodore Van Buren Coupland whose story, you will recall, we have already traced to New Orleans after the Civil War. His inheritance of land and cattle on Brushy Creek in Central Texas motivated Major Coupland to move back to Texas with his wife and one son, Frank Hamilton Coupland. He set up temporary

living quarters in a small frame house on the south bank of Brushy Creek on land that is now owned by Ernest Rohlack--about a mile from Coupland.

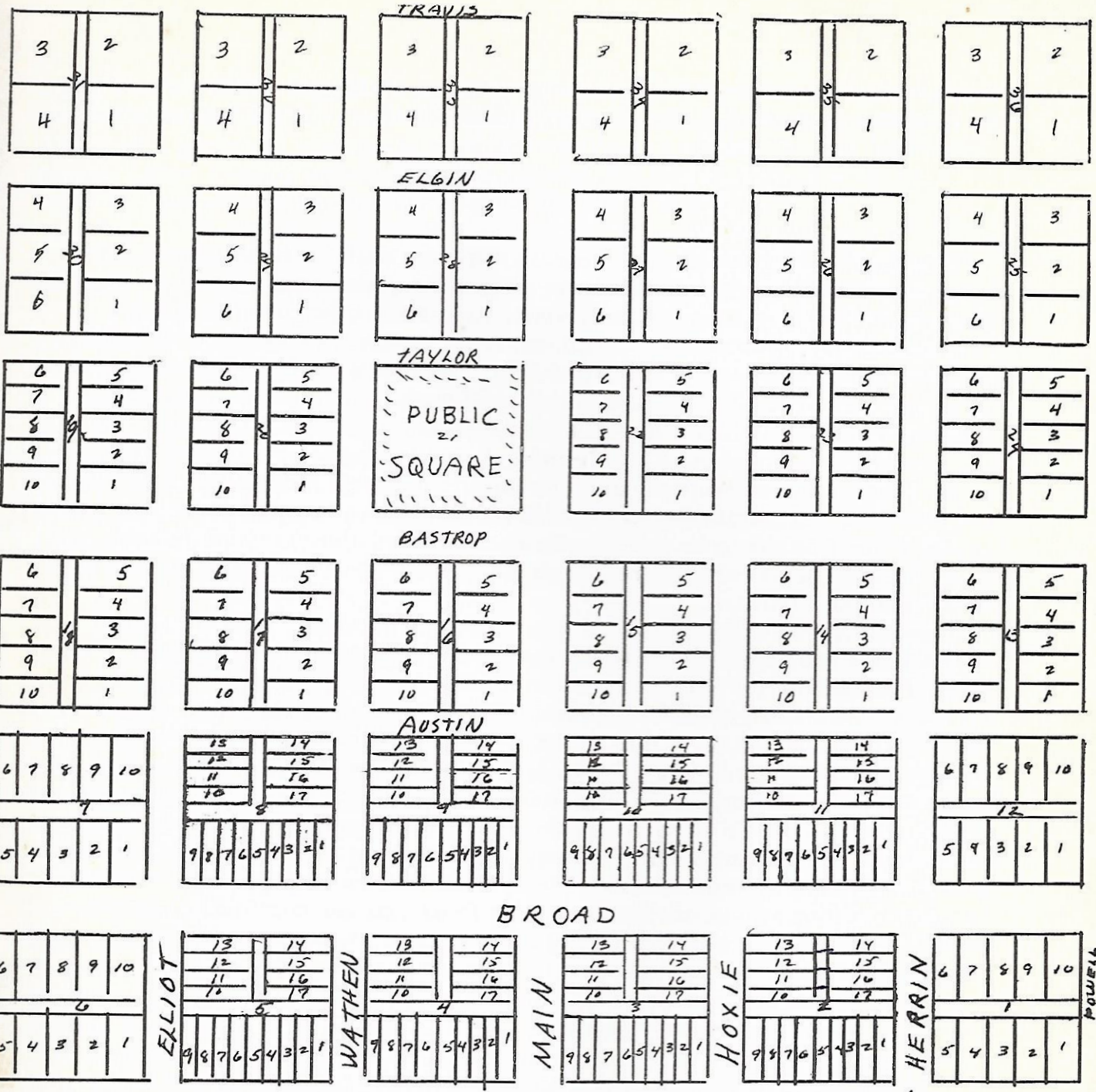
THE RAILROAD CITY

On February 3, 1887, the Taylor, Bastrop and Austin Railway bought a 100-foot right-of-way from Major Coupland to extend the rail line from Taylor to Boggy Creek toward Houston. Since the railroad cut right through his ranch, Coupland became inspired with a grandiose idea to build a city--as great cities elsewhere in the West were springing up along the rail lines. So Coupland got together with two men from Taylor, C. H. Welch and H. Dickson, to form a corporation. Its name was "The Coupland City Company" and its purpose, according to its charter, was "to purchase, subdivide and sell land in the town of Coupland." The capital stock of \$5000 was divided into 100 shares at par value \$50.00 each. As a site for the city, the company bought from the Coupland estate a rectangle of 200 acres of land on both sides of the railroad track.

A map was prepared showing the names of streets, which incidentally, have never yet come into common use. A city square was blocked off for a Town Hall, which also never materialized. Thursday, May 12, 1887, was the day of the public sale of lots. Trains on the new rail line brought people from Taylor on the north and Elgin on the south. Auctioneer J. A. H. Hosack came from San Antonio to serve as master of ceremonies. Posters were printed presenting the city of Coupland as "an inducement to capitalists who are seeking investments, a large, sure and increasing income for their investments." Merchants and tradespeople were offered an opportunity to make their labor bear fruit "an hundredfold." Farmers were promised rich soil and excellent conditions for raising cotton, vegetables, and fruit.

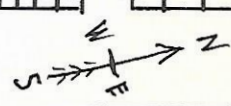


MARCH 28, 1887
"COUPLAND CITY"



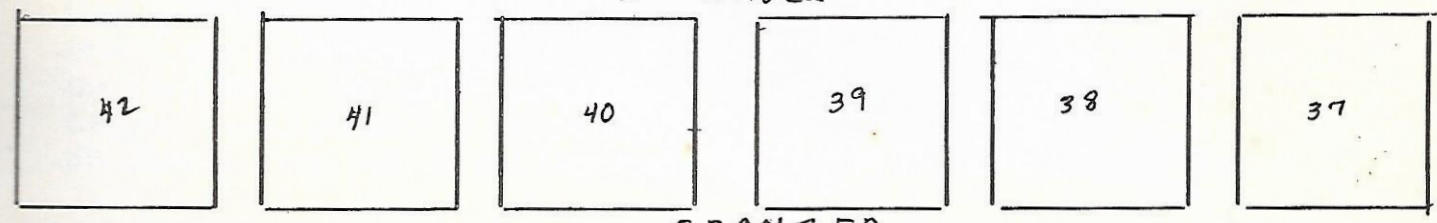
1" = 260' APPROX

COMMERCE
DEPOT

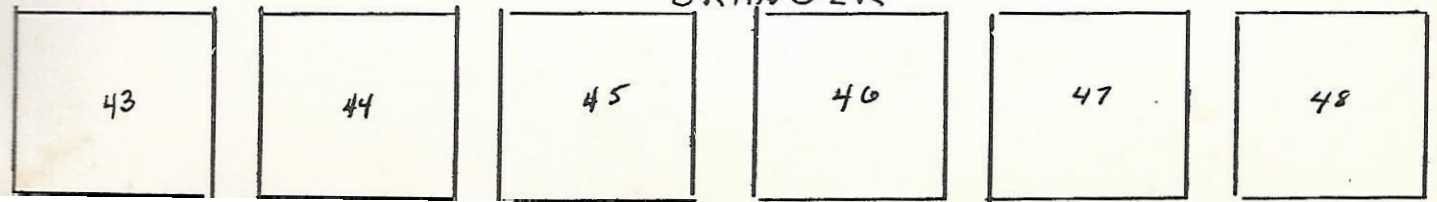


TAYLOR - BASTROP & HOUSTON Rwy.

ALLIANCE



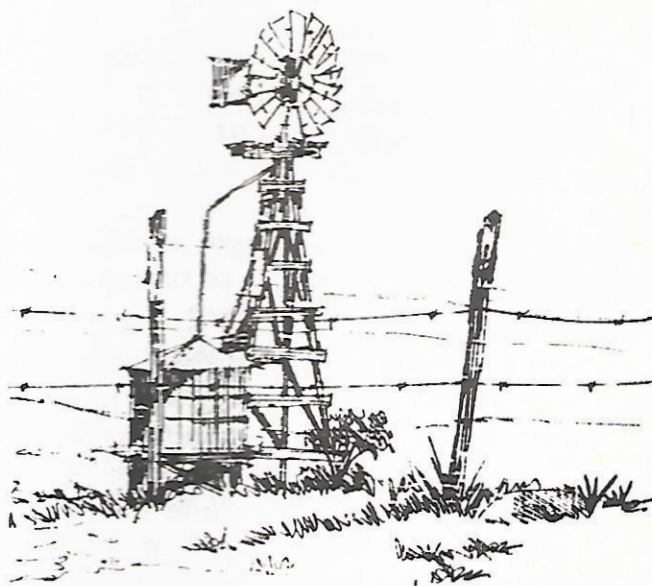
GRANGER



GEH MÜT INS TEXAS

As Coupland, according to its founders, was the future city of promise, so Texas was viewed as the land of promise flowing with milk and honey to a new breed of homesteaders who were now moving to Texas by the thousands from Germany and Switzerland. "GEH MÜT INS TEXAS" was the popular slogan heard on street corners all over Germany and other European countries. By this time (1880s) the wild longhorns on the seas of grass had been all but depleted. The windmill and the barbed wire fence introduced a new method of agriculture. The large blocks of land around Coupland were even further subdivided to accommodate the new agricultural style and the new people who were moving in.

These immigrants were hard workers and a hardy people. They had to be to survive the monumental tasks which confronted them. Mesquite and cactus had to be grubbed out by hand. Rattlesnakes and coyotes were a constant concern. The heat in the summer time was oppressive to people who had come from a cold climate. The land had to be turned over for the first time by ox-drawn ploughs. During all this travail their native language, German, became a kind of glue that held these people together in a close-knit and morale-boosting community of which the new city of Coupland became the center.



These persons left the familiar old world and ventured forth into the unknown new world for many and varied reasons. By far the most common motive for the change was disenchantment with the regimentation and growing militarism of society in their homeland and especially the policy of compulsory military training for the youth. The Heilkeckers, Zucknicks, Heinskes, Foersters and many other Coupland families remember this as the main incentive for their forebearers' journey to America.

Another motive that brought some families here was the dream of getting rich quick or at least of bettering their lot. For example,

According to records, in 1890 Pastor Ernst baptized the infant Louis Foerster in the Pear Valley School located on the Franz Nickel farm east of Coupland. In 1892, using Luther's Catechism as a text, he gave confirmation instruction in the home of Dietrich Goetz south of Coupland. On the certificate he identified the congregation as St. Peters Lutheran of Coupland. We cannot tell how the name St. Peters originated, but it seems to have become fixed in the minds of the people in the years that followed. The term "Lutheran" was used on the document probably because Ernst was the pastor of a Lutheran church at McDade, though the St. Peters group was more or less interdenominational in the beginning.

CZILLAT

In 1893 the group was able to work out a more frequent schedule of religious ministry with Rev. Gus Czillat of Taylorville. About this time the public school on Elliot Street in Coupland became the regular meeting place of the congregation. Sometime during 1894 the group organized into a more or less official congregation, and that year has come to be thought of as the year of the birth of St. Peters Church.

KANMACHER

In the spring of 1895 the infant congregation assigned its president, John Goetz, the task of getting a teacher for the school who could also conduct worship services in German at least one Sunday a month. Mr. Goetz appealed to Rev. C. Kniker, the president of the German Evangelical Synod of North America. This immigrant denomination traced its origins to Uhlrich Zwingli in Switzerland and Martin Luther in Germany. Kniker was able to recommend a Rev. Kanmacher, whom the congregation called at a salary of \$400 a year.

Kanmacher arrived on October 1 and later that month the congregation voted to build a parsonage on the northwest quarter of block 5 purchased from Aschen and Kreidel for \$70.00 to be paid in three years. Reinhold Aschen was contracted to oversee the project by the building committee: August Kreidel, Wm. Henze and F. Wilgrube.

Music for both the school and the church was provided by a pump organ which had been loaned to the congregation by John Goetz. In 1895 the church voted to buy the organ from Goetz for \$25.00. Ten years later the same organ was moved into the new church building where it served until it was replaced, first by a piano and then in 1938 by an electronic organ. In 1970 the Men's Brotherhood dug the original organ out of the attic, had it rebuilt and placed it in the educational building.

RUDOLPH

Kanmacher remained in Coupland less than a year and moved to Dallas. By the beginning of the school term in 1896 the congregation had called a new teacher-pastor, Rev. Ernst Rudolph. His major contribution was to prepare a constitution for the congregation. On January 24, 1897, the president John Klattenhof presented the document at the congregational meeting. It was adopted and signed by the 23 members present. At the same meeting the congregation took a special vote to join the German Evangelical Synod of North America.

RAASE

After serving about two years Pastor Rudolph moved and was followed by a young man, Rev. Raase. He devoted his full time to the church, for the school operation was separated from the church except that the pastor continued to teach a two-month course in German in the public school during the summer.

FINANCIAL SYSTEM

The immigrants, having come from a society where the church was tax supported, were rather awkward in their handling of the financial affairs of the congregation. The four members of the church council divided the members of the congregation into classes according to their estimated wealth. Families in class I were assessed \$16.00 a year for the support of the pastor. Those in class II were assessed dues of \$12.00; class III, \$8.00; and class IV, \$4.00. On top of that, the landowners were required to bring four bushels of corn for the pastor's horse, and renters were assessed two bushels. Building projects called for an additional assessment of money plus labor and the use of the wagons and teams to haul building materials. Any new expense during the year required another canvass of the congregation. In spite of all this economic activity, the church was constantly in financial trouble. A main concern at almost every congregational meeting was the collection of delinquent dues of one kind or another.

During the Sunday services a free-will offering was taken, usually in the amount of a nickel or a dime per person. To facilitate this collection, in 1899, the congregation bought a "KLINGELBEUTEL". This was a pouch with a bell attached to a long stick. At one congregational meeting objection was raised about the noise made by the KLINGELBEUTEL and the fact that it was held by the ushers, sometimes, it was thought, a little too close to the worshipers' face. But the motion to discontinue its use failed to carry.

PRESS

After serving the church for about a year Rev. Raase left with his new bride from the local community, Mary Stern. He was followed by an old man, Rev. G. Press, who moved into the parsonage with his wife. His four sons, all ministers, had already moved out and had families of their own. One son, Sam, later became president of Eden Seminary, the denomination's school of theology in St. Louis. After serving three and a half years, Pastor Press moved to Houston to live in retirement with another son. Since the church was unable to get a pastor for eight months, Press was asked to return to Coupland from time to time to conduct services.

KREBS

During the months that the pulpit was vacant the congregation became restless and vented its frustration in December, 1904, by voting to withdraw from the denomination. The Texas District responded anyway by sending a young man from Baltimore, Maryland, Rev. G. Krebs. Even so, the church did not re-unite with the denomination until 1907 by a vote of 11 to 1.

Krebs arrived by train on the first Sunday in January, 1905, to conduct a guest service. The 23 members present voted unanimously to call him as pastor at a salary of \$400 per year plus heat and extra fees for ministerial services. Pastor Krebs, his wife and one daughter moved into the newly redecorated parsonage. Another daughter, Ruth, was born while he served as pastor here.

HOUSE OF WORSHIP

The arrival of the new minister breathed a new spirit into the congregation resulting in a decision to build a house of worship. William Pfluger of Pflugerville gave the church two lots just across the road from the parsonage. A committee consisting of August Kreidel, Otto Eiben, William Henze Sr., Louis Foerster Sr., Fritz Wilgrube, William Goetz, William Schroeder, W. Rohlack and F. Nickel Jr. drew up the plans. At a meeting in the spring, the congregation adopted the plans and named a building committee: A. M. Pfluger, August Kreidel, and Wm. Henze. Joe Meier of Rose Hill was the general contractor, and the members of the church were lined up as a volunteer labor force.

Before the new building got started, Pastor Krebs invited all the ladies of the congregation to discuss the forming of a women's study and

service group. On May 11, 1905, eighteen women came to the parsonage to organize the FRAUENVEREIN. Ironically, Pastor Krebs was the first president of the ladies group and remained in that office all the years he served in Coupland. The FRAUENVEREIN became active immediately, and incidently, it has remained active ever since. Now being called the Ladies Aid.

An auspicious event took place in 1905 when the new church building was partially complete. During the worship service on October 8, the congregation followed Pastor Krebs as he marched in his flowing robe from the school house, through the parsonage yard, and across the road to the southwest corner of the site of the new building. With great ceremony they placed some current newspapers of the district and of the denomination in a fruit jar. The lid was sealed and it was placed in wet concrete in the foundation. It was covered with some more cement, and the corner stone was carefully placed on top.

Deutsche Evangelische Petri-Gemeinde

— 31 —

Coupland, Texas

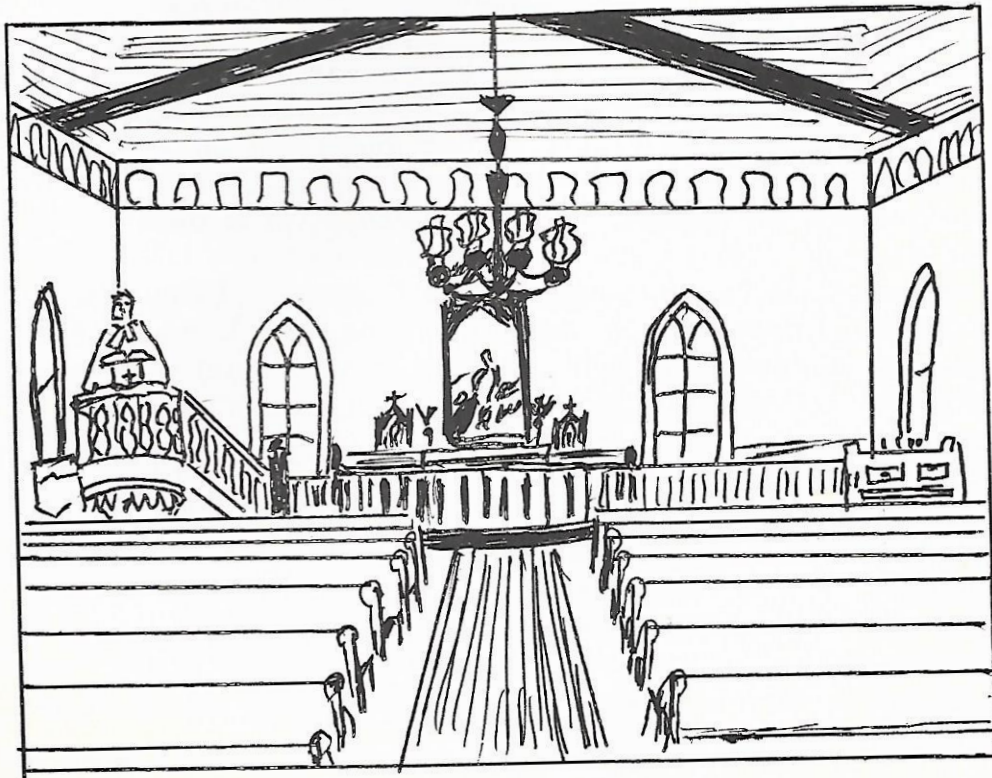
Sixty-nine years later when the congregation was preparing to celebrate its 80th anniversary, the church council decided to open the cornerstone and examine the contents of the jar. They found that through the years, as the church settled, the top of the jar had broken, filling with water and seriously damaging the papers inside. However, it is interesting to note that among the papers that were salvaged was a copy of DER GEMEINDEBOTE, the news organ of the Texas district of the Evangelical Church. It was edited by the Waco pastor, J. Jaworski, whose son, Leon, was at the time the papers were unearthed in 1974, playing an important role in national history as special prosecutor in Watergate and related offenses.

The building was completed early in 1906 at a cost of something over \$4000.00, including donated labor and furnishings. At the dedication service on February 11, 1906, the guest speakers were P. Dyke, Sam Press, A. Romanowski, and S. Bremberg. Ministers and members from the neighboring churches of Rose Hill and New Bern joined in the celebration, all receiving a picture of the new church as a memento of the occasion. A sketch of that picture is reproduced on the cover of this booklet.

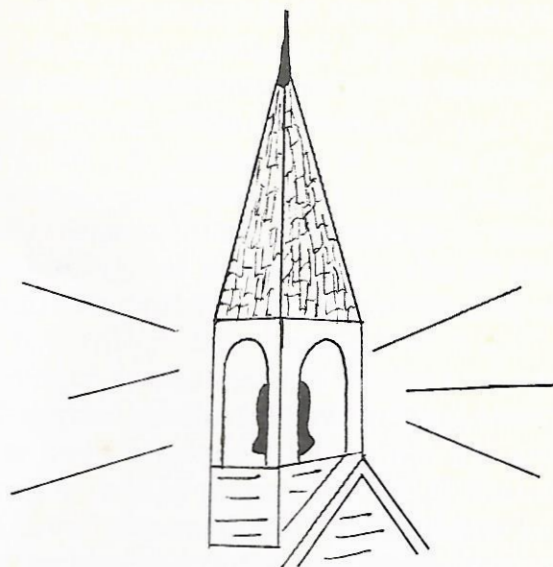
During the first year after construction a number of special items were added to complete the sanctuary. Luther's German translation of the Bible was given by the construction workers. The Ladies Aid gave the eight-oil-lamp chandelier which hangs from the center of the sanctuary. The newly organized JUGENBUND (Youth Fellowship) gave the painting of Peter and Jesus walking on the water which hangs over the altar. A watchmaker, Tendler, in Elgin gave the clock.

The windows originally installed in the sanctuary were simply colored glass in wood frames, but during the years that followed they were replaced by more expensive leaded art glass. In 1919 four such windows were added in memory of Mr. & Mrs. D. Goetz (the Bible and Supper) and Mr. and Mrs. Otto Eiben (the door and the Shepherd). In 1923 two windows were added for Mr. & Mrs. H. Wilgrube (the children and the empty tomb). After 1955 the window with the lamb symbol was added in memory of Heman Ging, the Gethsemane window for Theo Stern and the youth window for Folkert Eiben. The set of (come unto Me) windows on the south wall were added for Mr. & Mrs. A. M. Pfluger. In 1969 the Pastors Aid gave the rose window in the choir loft to celebrate the 75th anniversary. Finally in 1974 the Dove of Peace window in the vestibule was added in memory of Alvin Pfluger.

In 1978 the Holy Family window was installed in the Cry Room in memory of Julius and Myrtle Wittliff, and the two windows in the Choir Loft were added in memory of Mary Wernli and Richard and Kermit Kreidel.



The bell installed in the new church steeple and open to view has played an important role in the life of the community from the very beginning. In 1907 the congregation adopted the Swiss custom of ringing the bell on Saturday evening to alert the community to shine shoes, clean up the kids and in other ways prepare for the celebration of the Lord's day to follow. William Rohlack, Mrs. Hunsecker, Henry Heinski, Albert Speckels and Fritz Becker performed this bell ringing task through the years. When Becker died in 1967, the practice ceased. However, in 1974 it was resumed by Fritz Becker's nephew, Andrew, and Henry Heinski's grandson, Mancel.



In 1906 action was taken to ring the bell at the death of a church member. The age of the deceased was divided by three to include two pauses in the ringing. In the case of a child the age was divided by two providing for one pause. This practice has continued until the present day. Of course, the bell is also rung at the more customary occasions--the beginning of worship, special services, weddings, and the like.

ST. PETERS CEMETERY

St. Peters cemetery was started in 1910 when the heirs of R. Aschen donated to the church their family burial plot located about a quarter of a mile northwest of the sanctuary. The area was expanded by the church in that same year by the purchase of two acres of adjoining land from Otto Speckels. Frank Polzin and Arnold Muery were appointed to serve as the first cemetery committee. At first bodies were taken to the church for a public service, but to avoid the possibility of spreading disease, the congregation voted in April 1906 "to no longer bring corpses into the church but to have the service in the home and at the cemetery." But by 1928 with improvement in embalming procedures the public funeral service with the body in the sanctuary was resumed.

SCHULLE HALLE

Soon after the sanctuary was built the congregation began to feel the need of even more space for purposes other than worship. In 1910 the

congregation bought from Wm. Pfluger lots ten and eleven east of the sanctuary making the church property on which the sanctuary was located a quarter of the block in area. In 1913 Pastor Krebs presented the congregation a plan for the building of what he called a SCHULE HALLE. He suggested that such a building would be useful for organizational meetings, Sunday school and German summer school. The vote on the plans, however, did not carry. So the idea for a new building laid dormant until 1924 when Herman Ging, C. W. Pfluger, A. M. Pfluger, J. A. Speckels and Alfred Pfluger were named to a building committee to construct a fellowship hall with a stage and a small kitchen. In April 1925 the new building was dedicated with a celebration in which all the children marched from the sanctuary down the walk and into the new building singing "VO IST MEIN HOUS? "

It was a short lived moment of joy for the congregation, for after incurring the debt, the Coupland area was hit by a severe drought. On many farms there was not a blade of grass in the pasture nor a stalk of cotton in the fields. The hard experience of drought in 1925 turned out to be an introduction to the hard times of the depression years that followed.

WORLD WAR I

In 1918 when the first world war was raging in Europe the Coupland community, like many other German settlements, suffered severe persecution. The fever of war had created an uneasy tension between the "Germans" and the other citizens of the area who were simply called "Americans." Monitors were assigned to the worship services at church to see that nothing subversive or unpatriotic was said.

The use of the German language particularly offended many persons and patriotic groups. At a congregational meeting on June 30, 1918, Pastor Krebs read a letter addressed to the congregation from the Williamson County Council for Defense. We do not have a copy of the letter but it seems to have had an intimidating effect upon the congregation. A resolution was passed abolishing the German summer school immediately in the hope that by so doing they would be allowed to continue the German worship services.

As an additional gesture of compliance the congregation voted to institute two additional evening services a month in the English language. It was quite a task for Pastor Krebs who could speak very little English. In recognition of this extra burden and the loss of German school tuition the Pastor was granted a \$50.00 increase in his salary.

These traumatic struggles with "patriotism" and the language during the war had one beneficial, historic influence upon the life of St. Peters church.

The extra English services that were begun under pressure during this period continued on a voluntary basis after the war. It was to be the first step in the necessary transition from the German language to English. The immigrants were gradually moving out of their old way of thinking into the life and culture of their host country. By the time a new minister was needed in 1925 the congregation insisted that the candidate be able to preach in English as well as in German.

The Industrial Revolution brought about some radical changes in the life style of the community. In 1921 Pastor Krebs bought a brand new Model T Ford bringing to a close the age of the horse. The barn was moved to the front of the lot on Wathen Street and converted into a car garage. In the wider community the automobile brought with it hard surfaced roads. This chain of events triggered the decline of commerce in the village of Coupland, a decline which continued until about 1970.

Concern for human suffering has been characteristic of St. Peters Church through the years. Probably the first extra mile effort in Church World Service was taken in the January meeting of 1921 when the group took up a collection of \$234 for milk cows for war-ravaged Germany. That idea has now become ingrained into the life of the Church so that each year on Reformation Sunday the Youth Fellowship canvasses the community for Christian Rural Overseas Program. In 1973, for example, the collection was more than \$300 as an extra effort of the community for Church World Service.

KNIKER

After serving the congregation for 21 years, Pastor Krebs presented his resignation at a special meeting on November 25, 1925. The president, William Henze appointed a pulpit committee and on March 24, 1926, Rev. Paul Kniker arrived by train from Beasley to preach a trial sermon. All 42 members present voted "YA" to call as pastor Rev. Paul Kniker--whose father, as president of the Synod, had counseled with the church back in 1895. Soon after he moved to Coupland, Kniker met and fell in love with Dora Henze from Austin, the granddaughter of William Henze, the president of the congregation. They were married about a year later on June 27, 1927, and the bride moved into the parsonage.

During the following years the congregation engaged in a rather difficult struggle over the question of which language to use for the church services and meetings. The older people generally wanted to retain German and the younger members wanted to move toward

the English. A few Sunday school classes and the Youth Fellowship adopted English. Confirmation instruction was given in both German and English. On June 29, 1929, a move was successful to add one additional English evening service per month to minister to those who could not get much out of the German services.

BAPTIST CHURCH

The people who made up the small congregation for the English services were mostly persons who had worshipped in the Baptist Church which was located on the corner of Broad and Herrin Streets. This Baptist congregation had started back about 1914 when Milton Cunningham organized a group in a rented business building. The church later bought two lots and built a small auditorium. The effort never really generated much head-way and by 1926 the services were discontinued. A number of the remaining members, the Fords, the Kimmons, Chalupas, Sorensens, and Beans, were the ones who worshipped in the evening services at St. Peters church and some of them eventually transferred their membership.



The abandoned Baptist church building with its furnishings was purchased by St. Peters Youth Fellowship in 1934 for \$500. Emil Polzin, using his house-moving gear, his mules and the boys from the Youth Fellowship, moved the building to the lot east of the parsonage where it served for many years as a youth building and community center.

In late 1931 Kniker left Coupland to become pastor of a church in San Antonio. From there he went to Burton where his health began to fail, and he died in 1947 at the age of 47. His body was returned to Coupland for burial in St. Peters Cemetery on the lot of his wife's family, William Henze. One lot in the cemetery was reserved especially for ministers and their families, but that lot remains unused today since Kniker is the only former pastor buried in the cemetery.

MOHR

After Kniker left Coupland the church was once again without pastoral leadership for some months, during which time Julius Kasiske of Richland served as supply pastor. Incidentally, his daughter, Gretchen, now lives in Coupland and is a member of St. Peters church. Her name is Pfluger.

To secure a new minister the president, C. W. Pfluger, corresponded with the Texas Synod president Robert Mohr. He recommended one minister after another, all of whom chose not to come or for some other reason were not called by the congregation. Synod President Mohr even visited Coupland himself to meet with the council to help them with their work of calling a new minister. Finally, in John Alden fashion, the council said to Mohr, "Why don't you come and be our pastor?" Surprisingly, he accepted that call and moved into the parsonage with his wife, Olga, and two sons. One son, Bill, later married a local girl, Evelyn Ging.

In 1934 an important church merger took place in American Protestantism which affected the story of St. Peters church. At a joint general synod meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, on June 26, the Evangelical Synod of North America and the Reformed Church of America became one, adopting the name Evangelical and Reformed Church. From then on until 1957 the local church was known as St. Peters E. & R. Church.

In those days, unlike today, the rite of confirmation did not automatically admit persons into the membership of the church. When Mohr arrived, he found a number of young persons who had received confirmation instruction but who had not yet joined the church. He went to work on these prospects and during the following years a remarkable number of persons were added to the membership roll. In fact, a record number of 38 persons were received in the one congregational meeting in January of 1938. Since then, in 1954, the rite of confirmation was declared the service of reception of youth into full membership of the church.

THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

That meeting in 1938 was historic in another respect. Words requiring the German language were stricken from the constitution. We noted earlier that some modest changes in that direction had already taken place during and following World War I. But the constitutional revision of 1938 opened the way for the eventual complete transition to the English language. It was a slow and tedious process, though, for as late as 1944 the congregational meetings were still conducted and the minutes recorded by secretary Gottlieb Hardi in the German language. Then in 1945 the

congregation instructed the secretary, Alfred Albers, to begin recording the minutes in English.

As late as 1946, by action of the congregation, there were still more German services than English. But the trend toward English continued until in 1943, for example, there were 71 English services with an average attendance of 109 as compared to 27 German services with an average attendance of 44. Then in 1955 the program became totally English when a pastor was called (Johnson) who could speak no German at all.

CHURCH WOMEN

Still a third historic event took place in the annual meeting of 1938. Words limiting church membership to males only were stricken from the constitution. Up to this time whenever a man joined the church he did so, like the Philippian jailor, on behalf of his whole family.* Perhaps this custom also derived from the European patriarchal family style.

There were some extra-constitutional developments in this system too, for during the 1920s some widows were voted into membership as the head of the family. Also in 1934 the church voted into membership the first single woman, Lydia Etzel. The congregational action in 1938 gave sanction to a practice already in use and opened the way for women to participate fully in the life of the church in their own right. However, it was not until ten years later, 1948, that a motion carried to invite the women to attend future congregational meetings.

A further move toward women's liberation was made in the meeting on January 10, 1965. The chairman of the Laity group, Willie Guenther, made a recommendation that ladies be considered as candidates for the church council. One year later Eleanora Hardi was nominated and elected as the first woman to serve on that governing body of the congregation, followed by Helen Polzin and Alice Guenther.

In 1942 the old 1895-model parsonage was demolished and the lumber salvaged to be used in the construction of a new one and one-half story building which is home for the pastor today. Mohr and his family lived in a hand house at the cotton gin temporarily while the new building was being constructed. The price tag for the new structure was \$6500. (There is a sketch of the old parsonage on the next page)

*Acts 16:31



During the year 1945 the long-time church president, C. W. Pfluger, died in office. He had been elected for one year back in 1925 followed by A. M. Pfluger and William Henze. Then he was elected again in 1931 and was re-elected each year for 14 consecutive years. At his death his son, Bill, was promoted from deacon to elder to fill the vacancy in that office. Gottlieb Hardi succeeded him as president followed by S. R. Ging, Bill Pfluger, Willie Riedel and Alvin Eiben.

In 1949 Pastor Mohr got the feeling that it was time for him to move on to another field of service. He presented a letter of resignation at a called meeting of the congregation on April 10. But Julius Wittliff moved, and the congregation voted 142 to 21 to reject the resignation. As a result of the vote Mohr consented to remain. Later that same year he had the additional pleasure of hosting the ordination service for his son, Paul, who entered the pastoral ministry.

In 1953 the congregation engaged in an extensive building program to tie the sanctuary to the educational building and add classroom and kitchen space. The building committee included Julius Wittliff, W. F. Riedel, Edwin Goetz, Max Pfluger, G. A. Kneip, Mrs. A. A. Marosko, Mrs. Kermit Kriedel, Gottlieb Hardi, Carl Seggern and Alvin Eiben. Architect Lancaster of Austin drew up the plans, and John Thompson was the contractor.



The project was completed and dedicated on September 27, 1953, with an organ concert by Hilma Pfluger, who had served as music director since 1930, and still does. Speakers were John Mueller, the vice-president of Texas Synod of the E & R Church; Paul Mohr, the pastor's son; Ed Kloppe, a ministerial son of the congregation; and Rev. Richard Kuretsch.

INTER RACIAL RELATIONS

It was on January 13, 1946, that St. Peters church first officially confronted what might be called the racial issue. It had been reported that some land next to St. Peters cemetery might be sold to Negroes for the purpose of a burial ground. When that prospect was brought up at the congregational meeting the sixteen members present went on record "protesting the sale of land adjoining our cemetery for such purposes."

Up until then the moral implications relating to the racial issue were not discussed much in official public circles. In the early years Negro families lived on farms as tenants, and they worked in the fields with the white land owners. Relations between them were guided by unspoken social custom which permitted certain associations between the races and forbade others. For example, white children were taught by custom that it was all right to work in the fields alongside Negro children, but it was not all right to play together at other times. These lessons of custom were sometimes confusing and not always well learned by the children who in every generation tended to be more open and broad minded than the older folks.

An illustration from the Kaase family presents a case in point. On Saturday all the grown-ups of both white and Negro families on the farm went off to town to do the weekly trading. When the wagons were safely out of sight all the children on the place, white and black, got together to play. They made a sliding board on the tin roof of a farm building, one by one zipping down the roof into the loose hay below. One of their number, chosen to be the look-out, perched on top of another out-building near the road. At the first sight of the approaching wagons, the look-out whistled a signal, and all the children scurried to their respective houses. When the grown-ups pulled up in their yards, both sets of parents, white and Negro, were greeted by docile and obedient children on the front porch.

Until very recent years the races have been separated in religion as well as in education. The Negroes of Coupland worshipped in the Pear Valley Baptist Church. It dates back to the 1890s when Rev. Williams came from Houston to hold revival services in the wagon lot south of the cotton gin, resulting in the organizing of a small congregation which held services in a brush arbor structure. Then the group moved to the home of Rody Jones on the corner of Walker and Commerce Streets. Sometime later C. W. Pfluger

leased the congregation some land east of the railroad track. Gus Kneip helped to draw up the plans and contractor Kreuger built a sanctuary in 1912. Years later in 1932 the congregation bought a half acre of land from Pfluger and moved the church to that property where it stands today.

As the Negro population of Coupland has declined the membership in Pear Valley Church has dwindled until only 25 or 30 persons remain. Rev. L. D. Piper comes from Elgin to hold services on two Sundays a month. John Brockington is the chairman of the board of deacons.

Through the years a gradual change in attitude and relationships between the races has evolved. Many years ago, on its own initiative, the community integrated the busing of students to school. Later as a result of change in laws, the public school was integrated without incident. Today in 1974, 56% of the students are white, 33% Mexican American and 11% Negro in the eight grades of the Coupland Elementary School.

The change in attitude at St. Peters church was dramatically highlighted during the Lenten season of 1969. Pastor Johnson and the church council worked out a program of mid-week services featuring guest preachers from nearby communions which were involved in the ecumenical Council on Christian Union. The pastor called the members of the council together on Sunday and recommended that the guests in St. Peters pulpit include a minister from the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He suggested that the members of the council take the matter under advisement and be ready to act at the regular council meeting on the following Thursday.

Tension was somewhat high when at the meeting president Alfred Steit in a calm and collected manner encouraged each member to express his feelings fully and voice his opinions freely. Finally, when the vote was taken it was five to four in favor of extending the invitation. The minister, Rev. Johns, and his wife of Taylor graciously accepted the invitation, and they were graciously received at the service by the members of the congregation. Later in 1973 when some black children attended Sunday school, morning worship and Bible school the matter was raised for discussion again and no objection was registered.

Back to our chronology, after leading the congregation in the building program, Mohr received a call from the church in Beasley. He resigned in the fall of 1954 after serving St. Peters church for a record 22 years. Edwin Schaefer, pastor of the new Trinity Church in Austin, proved to be a helpful leader during the difficult interim period. The church council began meeting every month to deal with the many adjustments needed to prepare for the calling of a new minister. The salary had to be increased. The vacation period was extended to a month and a car allowance had to

be considered. The class system of church finance, described earlier, in which members were assessed dues, was replaced by an every member canvass for voluntary subscription to a unified budget.

JOHNSON

Among the candidates considered by the pulpit committee was Jewel Johnson. He was a Methodist who had served the E. & R. Church at Lewisville, Texas, while attending Perkins School of Theology. He had been the roommate of the president, Bill Pfluger, at the spring meeting of Texas Synod in New Orleans. He was now serving a Methodist church in Hutsonville, Illinois, but had applied for transfer to the E. & R. Church, which explained why he was on the list of prospects.

Johnson arrived by train on January 19, 1955, to conduct a guest service, after which he was elected as pastor by a vote of 140 to 3. So on March 30, his 1953 Chevrolet pulled a small trailer into Coupland with his wife, Mary, and three sons, Stephen, Philip and Paul. On Palm Sunday, April 3, an overflow crowd of 278 persons greeted him to hear him preach a sermon entitled "The Lord Has Need Of It." During the following months a renewed interest in churchmanship was demonstrated by a notable increase in attendance at public worship. On world-wide communion Sunday, for example, the sanctuary and the side rooms were filled with 370 persons when the pastor's new baby, Martha, was baptized. The average attendance for Sunday worship for the year 1956 was a record 231 persons per Sunday.

During this period some significant changes took place in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The original schedule called for the sacrament only four times a year--Easter, Christmas, Pentecost, and Reformation Sunday. Those not communing were dismissed from the service and those who did commune gathered around the altar in small groups of about twelve to drink from a common cup. On the way back to their seats they dropped an extra offering in a plate on the front pew. Some years earlier the common cup had already given way to individual cups, but in 1956 the dismissal was discontinued, members of the council assisted in officiating, the extra offering was eliminated, more frequent observance began, and communion in the pews was initiated. The confirmation class that year made and installed cup receptacles for the pews. Also the use of grape juice instead of fermented wine was introduced.

Another change in the family name of the congregation took place in 1957 as a result of the historic merger of the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches. The name adopted by the new denomination was "United Church of Christ."



The pulpit of the neighboring congregation St. Johns of Richland, was vacant in 1958 after the resignation of Albert Petrich. So St. Peters Church was asked to share their pastor during the interim until the arrival of their new pastor E. H. Schwengel. In 1959 another neighbor, Trinity Church of Austin, called upon Johnson to supply their pulpit after the resignation of Edwin Schaefer and until the arrival of Bill Anderson. Then later in the same year St. Peters Church itself was in need of a supply pastor, for Johnson moved to Burton, Texas, on May 1.

DOLLGENER

The Richland church returned the favor by sharing their pastor, Schwengel, who with Frank Horak supplied the pulpit until the arrival of the new minister, Duayne Dollgener. Originally from Dallas, he had just graduated from Eden Seminary when he moved into the parsonage with his new bride, Donna, on July 1, 1959. All three of their children, Cynthia, Paula, and Carl were born during their ministry at Coupland.

In September the president, Bill Schwenke, signed papers on behalf of the congregation to support the construction of a cooperative village water system. Up to this time the houses in Coupland had self-contained systems catching rain water on the metal roofs and storing it in underground cisterns. The sewage system of the village is still an individual enterprise. In 1960 the congregation bought two additional lots, 3 and 4 of block 5, in order to extend the septic tank distribution field of the parsonage.

During this period some significant organizational changes took place in the congregation. The Evangelical and Reformed Hymnal was introduced in the worship service. A young layman, Don Wernli, developed into something of a lay minister serving the church whenever the pastor was out of town. A board of Christian Education was formed to look after the work of the Sunday School. Occasional German services were planned on a trial basis, and two identical worship services were conducted for a trial period. A remodeling program by contractor, Max Pfluger, moved the musical instruments and the choir into the balcony. The project was undertaken in connection with the celebration of the 70th Anniversary in 1964.

GUMPER

Dollgener resigned effective December 1, 1964 to become assistant pastor at New Braunfels. A number of ministers were called upon to fill the pulpit until the last of January when the new pastor, Elmer Gumper, arrived with his wife Esther, former missionaries from Honduras. They were both devout gardeners turning the parsonage yard into a beautiful flower garden. This interest of the pastor motivated the Confirmation Class to plant live oak trees on either side of the street in front of the church.

Gumper combined a personal pietistic emphasis with a broader concern for social justice. He organized the congregation into small groups called "house churches" for study, discussion, prayer and other faith strengthening purposes. On the broader front in the January meeting of 1967 he urged the members of the congregation to use their influence to bring about a disengagement of U. S. forces in Vietnam. Later that same year he promoted a special offering for Palestine refugee victims of the six day war in the Middle East.

Plans to celebrate the 75th Anniversary were begun early in order to include a major re-decorating program for the Sanctuary under the chairmanship of Vi Kreidel. William Ratliff of Austin was the architect. One of the recommended changes which created quite a turbulence in the congregation, was the suggestion to suspend a large cross over a free standing communion table with a dorsal curtain to replace the painting on the wall. To resolve the conflict created by this proposal a special, off-the-record congregational meeting was called to give all the members a chance to vent their feelings and share their thoughts. The result was a compromise plan leaving the altar and painting intact and adopting the other recommended designs-hemp fabric for the walls, a facade behind the altar and paneling in the chancel area.

JOHNSON

Gumper resigned in the spring of 1968 and like Dollgener before him became assistant pastor of the church in New Braunfels. Dr. Jesse Wilson of Austin was called to serve the church during the interim. When the pulpit committee learned that their former pastor Jewel Johnson of Dallas was available for a call to a less urban setting, they asked him to return for a second "tour of duty" at Coupland. On the first weekend in August while vacationing at Lake Travis, he slipped off from his friends, the Bob Seiberts to return to Coupland to conduct a guest service. Following the benediction John Thompson called the meeting to order and the vote was 159 to 3 to call Johnson back to Coupland.

The renovation plans for the sanctuary were carried out during the spring and summer of 1969, and on November 2 a full house of 430 persons gathered at the anniversary celebration.

An endowment fund begun years ago by A. M. Pfluger was expanded to move toward a perpetual care arrangement for the cemetery. A new set of regulations for the cemetery was adopted which called for lower stone monuments and more mesquite grass.

In 1970 the Men's Brotherhood made a study of housing in the Coupland area. They found dozens of old but solid usable vacant houses and weed lots in and around the village. They engaged in an informal public relations program which encouraged the selling of abandoned property, the rehabilitation and selling or renting of abandoned houses, and the building of new homes to provide for low cost housing in the area.

Within four years several new homes were built. All the vacant houses in the village and many outside were rehabilitated and occupied. The abandoned drug store became a popular weekend eating place. The abandoned hardware store became the Coupland Tavern. The population of the village itself jumped from about 140 in 1970 to 190 in 1974.

Many of the new people who moved into the area found that St. Peter's' open and inclusive policy gave them an opportunity to worship and serve the Lord in this place among this people. Some examples are Wayne Brown, who serves as treasurer of the church council; Jeanne Taliaferro, the choir director; Stella Taliaferro, the president of the Youth Fellowship; John Reavis, the Sunday School superintendent; and Zada Downing, a Sunday School teacher to mention only a few.

RELIGION AND POLITICS

During the crisis years of 1973 and 1974 the church council and the pastor had to wrestle together with the tough questions of the political implications of the gospel. Johnson had for years vigorously criticized United States policy of military intervention in Vietnam as immoral, illegal, and unjust. He also lashed out at what he called the domestic fruits of that war - government secrecy, usurpation of power by the executive branch, government lying, spying, and other police state methods. In April 1973 he preached a sermon calling for amnesty for Vietnam draft dodgers and deserters. He also expressed his feeling on current national trends in area newspapers.*

*Dallas Morning News, February 1, 1967

Austin American Statesman, October 17, 1968; April 7, 1969;
September 11, 1969; September 25, 1972; January 2, 1973; Jan. 7,
Jan. 9, Jan. 21, 1973; Sept. 17, 1974

Some people, perhaps most in the early days, objected strongly to this criticism of national policy and leaders. The ideas seemed to some to be unpatriotic or at least partisan against popularly elected leaders.

The subject was brought up for discussion at a church council meeting in April, 1973. Members of the council reported objections they were encountering and suggested that the pastor de-emphasize political implications of his message. No official action was taken, but a lively discussion took place on the broad issues involved. Shortly thereafter, the house of cards in the political arena began to fall, and the Vice-President, then the President, and many other figures were forced out of office for the very moral and criminal misdeeds that the pastor had been warning against. And President Ford, in his first speech, called for the amnesty that had seemed so radical seventeen months earlier when the pastor had suggested it.

A CITY SET ON A HILL

In 1974 Carl Moehnke was named chairman of a committee to plan a celebration of the 80th Anniversary. The major project adopted to commemorate the occasion was to engage the congregation in a study of the history of the church and its community. This little booklet is the result of a part of that effort.

But this is a story that has no conclusion, no end. The varied ministries of the church that were begun in the 1890s are still as vital as ever. The people who started it all have long since moved on, but others have stepped in to take their places to express their oneness in Christ, to make more effective their common witness in Him, and to serve His kingdom in the world.

Coupland may have failed to become the "city" envisioned by its founders, but it is set on a hill; and that lays upon us a certain mandate. For Jesus said, "A city set on a hill cannot be hid. No one lights a lamp to put it under a bowl; instead he puts it on a lampstand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and give praise to your Father in heaven."*

*Matthew 5:14--16